

Summarized Interview with DeArmond "Dee Dee" J. Carter

**Conducted by Nia King and Solenne Montgomery on March 28, 2021
for the West Springfield High School Applied History Program**

Ms. DeArmond J. Carter, 66, ("Dee Dee"), was interviewed by Nia King and Solenne Montgomery on March 28, 2021. Ms. Carter was born on January 14, 1955, at Columbia Hospital, located in the District of Columbia. Ms. Carter's parents, Virginia natives, brought her back to Fairfax County to grow up in Vienna, Virginia. She lived in a mixed family community. Her community was surrounded by agriculture and farmland. Ms. Carter noted that Fairfax County was very agricultural in the 50s up into the late 60s. She lived in the same household as her grandparents and parents including with her six siblings, five brothers, and one sister. Ms. Carter was the oldest girl in the family; today, 5 of her siblings are alive, and her oldest and youngest brothers are deceased. She grew up with her cousins, Great-aunts, and uncles who also lived in the same neighborhood. She remembers a large holiday feast with family members visiting from the Washington, DC Metro area. Other family members would visit from different parts of Fairfax County. Ms. Carter remembers eating home-cooked meals, including turkey, mashed potatoes, sweet potatoes, collard greens, macaroni and cheese, scalloped potatoes, homemade rolls, and drinking iced tea. She would also make desserts with her grandmother, which included rum cake, oatmeal cookies, chocolate chip cookies, and "Sandies" or butter cookies. She remembers the fun times she spent with family members enjoying the holidays and feasts. She could not participate in some of the holidays because she was always sick and commonly caught the flu during the winter months.

Ms. Carter's family is part of the Powhatan Confederacy throughout the East Coast and her Great-Great-Great-Great Grandmother, Keziah Hatton, and her tribe burned down the first

Fairfax County Courthouse at Tysons Corner (located at the corner of Old Courthouse and Chain Bridge Roads).

Ms. Carter grew up in a religious household at a young age. Her parents and grandparents both worshiped at a Baptist church while their children attended Catholic school. Ms. Carter's family attended the First Baptist Church of Vienna that was built in 1867 by free African-Americans and former slaves and the first church and school established in Vienna. She remembers getting up early on Sunday mornings to get dressed for church. Today, she is still Catholic and attended the same church she grew up in.

At the age of six, Ms. Carter's parents enrolled her and she attended kindergarten at Our Lady of Good Counsel, a Parochial or Catholic school in Vienna, VA; here, she remembers no recollection of facing racism. Ms. Carter remembers wearing a uniform to school, a green jumper with a white blouse and black buckled shoes. She remembers inviting her friends from Catholic school over to her house; most of her friends from private school were white. As children, they would play games like basketball, tag, and leapfrog, jacks, and checkers while growing up. They would also go to the nearby park to ride the merry-go-round, swing, and play in the jungle gym. Ms. Carter attended Catholic school during her elementary years until she finished the sixth grade. Ms. Carter then had to choose between going to an all-girls Catholic school in Washington, D.C or going to public school in Fairfax County. Ms. Carter chose to enroll and attend Henry David Thoreau Intermediate School because it was closer to home for the 7th and 8th grades. When first entering Thoreau Intermediate, she experienced many differences. She remembers not being accustomed to wearing what she called "causal clothes" to school.

Once she graduated from Thoreau Intermediate, she attended Oakton High School. Once at Oakton High School, Ms. Carter remembers racist encounters she experienced with white students. In 10th grade, she remembers when white students tried to fundraise off a day called "slavery day." She remembers white students tying ropes around their necks, trying to appear as slaves; then another student would pay in cash to "free" the person mocking a slave. Ms. Carter explained that "it was offensive" and confronted the white students about mocking slavery. She remembers the confrontation turned into an uproar (large argument) because the African American students opposed the white students who were mocking slavery. The white football players got mad, and the cheerleaders went along with the "slavery day" because the white students were trying to raise money. School officials had called the police to "diffuse" the uproar; the police's solution was only to arrest the African-American students. She later found out this was the motive when her parents told her police had a police van to arrest the African-American students. Mrs. Carter also remembers multiple altercations between African-American and white students at the time. Other racial discrimination she experienced at Oakton High School included microaggressions that African-American students had brought up to the white administration. Still, the administration did not listen to the African-American students' concerns. Ms. Carter remembers that rock music was constantly played, and no black musicians or artist music was played. Bands invited to Oakton High School for socials like sock hops were always all-white bands. She remembers many African-American students, including herself, stopped attending the sock hops because the music black students were interested in was never played. She remembers many African-American students never felt accepted or heard due to racial incidents and microaggressions. In high school, for fun, Ms. Carter joined the Distributive Education Clubs of America, the basketball team, tried out for cheerleading, and wanted to get

into computer club but did not meet the particular math course needed. At the age of 14, Ms. Carter worked part-time on weekends, bussing tables and washing dishes.

During this time, the Town of Vienna had its first fast-food restaurant, McDonald's, located near the outskirts of town in the SW quadrant. The first noticeable change during her teenage years was when Tysons Corner Mall was built. It was the first indoor mall in Fairfax County when it opened July 1968. At the time, the three anchor stores were Woodward & Lothrop (Woodies), Lansburgh's and Hecht's. Today, Tysons Corner Center has three anchor stores Bloomingdale's, Macy's, and Nordstrom. After the mall was completed, an explosion of buildings were built in Tysons Corner along Rte 7, Chain Bridge, and International Drive. Today, Tysons Corner is now named "Tysons", there are three Metro Stations, and it's now considered a "city" within Fairfax County.

Once she graduated from high school in 1972, Ms. Carter enrolled in Northern Virginia Community College. She attended one year at Northern Virginia Community College and left the second year because she thought she was not mature enough. She felt she was not mature because she graduated high school early and was not ready for young adulthood. At this time, Ms. Carter's father wanted her to pursue a career in computer sciences, but she decided not to, and instead, she entered the workforce. She remembers her first job at Mel-Par, where she worked on putting military parts and equipment together. She then found out the company was downsizing and stayed at Mel-Par until they laid her off. She remembers not liking the job or the people at the company. She was then hired at Vega Precision Laboratories, worked there for about 2 to 3 years, and then got a job working for the federal government. She entered as a Clerk-Typist at the Department of Energy and later became a Personnel Assistant. She worked for the federal government for three years. During this time, at the age of 21, Ms. Carter gave

birth to her daughter. At the age of 23, she left her job working for the Federal Government and pursued higher education full time. She went back to Northern Virginia Community College and earned her Associate Degree . Once she graduated from Northern Virginia Community College, she enrolled at American University in Washington, D.C., because they accepted all of her credits. While in school, she got a paid internship opportunity as a Sponsored Accounting Assistant.

Once finishing her internship, she graduated and earned her Bachelors' Degree in Business Administration with emphasis in Finance from American University in 1986 . She then was hired to work at First American Bank in 1987, located in Tysons Corner (today it is Wells Fargo Bank.) Here, she worked in the Virginia branch performing budgeting and forecasting. While working at First American Bank, she got the impression from her co-workers that they did not like African-Americans and it felt like a cliquish environment. She then got fired from the First American Bank in 1988 and got hired to work in Tysons Corner, VA (McLean, VA) for a government contractor as a Pricing Analyst for the Department of Defense Health Sector. She priced contracts for computerized military equipment. She then moved back to her grandparent's house in 1988 when her grandmother died. At the time she was living in in Springfield, Virginia. Her parents were still living in the same Vienna neighborhood Ms. Carter grew up in. In 1990, her job working for the Federal Contractor moved locations; so she moved Bailey's Crossroads. She decided to leave the job to be a little more active in her daughter's life. During the late 1990's, she then got a temporary job at Don Richards Association until she was hired at Freddie Mac, a housing loan company for banks to offer low interest rates to potential and existing homeowners. It was also the start of the credit crisis that hit the United States. It was difficult to get any type of loans: mortgage, car, and personal. She worked at Freddie Mac until

2008 when the worldwide Financial Crisis hit and 800,000 U.S. employees were laid off per week. She was laid off near the end of 2008 when no employers in private industries, temporary or permanent were hiring people. They were running lean companies.

During the 70s, 80s, and 90s, she noticed significant change in Fairfax County from multiple rural towns to becoming more suburban. She recalls numerous housing projects and high-rise office buildings being built and remembers her family members selling their land because they could not afford the high taxes.

She finally got a consulting role at Fannie Mae during mid-2014 as a Financial Analyst, another housing loan company, Freddie Mac's competitor. Ms. Carter worked there until the end of 2016. While employed and unemployed, she has worked at Macy's as a Part-Time Sales Associate until mid-March 2020 when the Covid-19 pandemic hit the country. I received a phone call not to come to work until further notice. In Dec 2020, she applied for a job at Temporary Solutions, so she now works as a Temporary Fiscal Analyst for the City of Alexandria. As of mid-May 2020, Ms. Carter still works for the City of Alexandria as a Temporary Fiscal Analyst performing accounting reconciliation for permits, reviewing and checking invoices for approval, and entering invoices into the Munis system.

Today Ms. Carter still lives in Vienna in the house she grew up in with her grandparents (her father's parents) and parents as well as her 6 siblings. Ms. Carter's sister often comes over for get togethers and cook family meals each Sunday. Recently, Ms. Carter's youngest brother died of a heart attack. Of the three brothers still living, one lives in Brooklyn, NY, another lives in Caroline County, VA, and a third lives in Manassas, VA. Ms. Carter's daughter now resides in the Metropolitan area of Atlanta, Georgia, with her husband and two daughters. One granddaughter is in college, and the other is in high school.

Some historical events Ms. Carter remembers living in Fairfax County included the first Earth Day in 1970. Ms. Carter was 16 years old at the time and remembered going into Washington, D.C., celebrating. She talked about climate change at the time and that it was vital for her to start conserving the earth at a young age. She remembered participating in cleaning up and seeing protestors with signs. Still to this day, the first Earth Day impacted her, and she cares about the environmental changes happening across the country today. Another historical event she remembers was the 14th Street Bridge crash on January 13, 1982. This was when an airplane crashed into the 14th Street Bridge over the Potomac River. This was a vivid memory of hers because she remembers exiting the bridge a few minutes earlier on a bus to come back to her home in Springfield. She recalled that as a tragic day because there were 74 fatalities and seeing news articles of people drowning in the cold river. She remembers this crash because the precipitation of the snow and freezing weather changed the environment when flying in cold weather across America.

When asked about the changes she has seen over the past years of living in Fairfax County, she explained today, living in Vienna, the housing expenses are not affordable anymore. There are numerous \$1.5+ million-dollar homes being built in the area. Some of the people living within the African-American community are leaving Vienna because they can't afford the cost of living anymore on a fixed-income. She told us some people sell their houses because the double taxes on housing are too high and not affordable living in Vienna any longer. She has noticed a significant decrease in the African-American population in the town of Vienna compared to the town in the 1950s.

Ms. Carter concluded her interview with the advice she would give to her grandchildren. She said, "create your own business and be your own boss." "There are numerous opportunities

for you to take advantage of and excel in today's world." In addition, if you need money, there are lenders out there that are willing to lend money and available to give money too. Also, apply for grants that is free money that you do not have to pay back."

Bibliography:

"U.S., School Yearbooks, 1880-2012"; School Name: Oakton High School; Year: 1970